

# **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore General Management Plan Newsletter 2**

## **Seeking Input for the Future of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore**

Dear Friends,

Work on the general management plan (GMP) for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is progressing on schedule. As we explained in Newsletter 1, this plan will provide a vision for the future of the lakeshore and a practical decision-making tool for assuring quality visitor experiences and protection of the lakeshore's special natural and cultural resources.

The focus of our efforts so far has been gathering data and defining the scope of the plan. A planning team which includes lakeshore staff, technical experts, and planners has worked on consolidating information on the lakeshore's geographic information system (GIS), collecting input from lakeshore staff and the public about issues and concerns that the plan should address (many of you helped us by responding to our last newsletter), and affirming the legislative and policy guidelines that will frame the GMP. This newsletter summarizes much of our work to date and includes a schedule of upcoming steps in the process.

We come to you again for input and ideas about the scope of the GMP. Your responses to this newsletter will help us make sure that the plan is comprehensive. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ivan D. Miller  
Superintendent

## What We Heard in Response to Newsletter One

We received numerous comments responding to the issues and concerns that were outlined in Newsletter 1. The statements identified as constructive were organized into eleven categories, including the seven categories addressed in the first newsletter as well as four additional categories: Access, External Issues, Trails, and Hunting. Below are summaries of the comments in the respective categories.

**Conservation of Natural Resources:** Comments on the natural resources of the lakeshore centered on keeping the area as natural as possible. Emphasis was placed on water quality, nonnative plant control, understanding the national and global significance of the lakeshore, and protecting natural resources from potentially impacting uses. Several comments referred to the impact by deer on vegetation inside and outside the lakeshore.

**Historic Preservation:** The majority of comments indicated a desire to preserve as many historic lakeshore structures as possible. Some also suggested demonstrations of historic activities such as farming or logging.

**Land Acquisition:** Some comments related to seeking assistance from outside entities to acquire lands. Some supported Crystal Ridge as a scenic corridor while others suggested abandoning this status. Acquisition of lands adjacent to the Crystal River was mentioned numerous times.

**Lakeshore Development:** Most comments suggested only small developments or no development at all. Some suggested new facilities including trails (a separate category), picnic tables, additional or improved parking areas, group camping, picnic shelters, roadside lookouts, improved directional signage, and additional toilet facilities.

**Lakeshore Operations and Maintenance:** Comments suggested a number of activities that could be implemented such as seeking opportunities for outside assistance, separating conflicting uses, and continuing current activities that were working well.

**Lakeshore Uses:** Uses most frequently addressed (trails and hunting) have been divided into separate issue categories. Some comments recommended monitoring jet ski use, developing and enforcing sensitive area zones, addressing possible gill net issues on inland lakes and streams, and monitoring canoe and kayak use on the Platte and Crystal Rivers.

**Wilderness:** Comments were divided between those which advocated maintaining (or expanding) and reducing the amount of wilderness. Some comments asked about the type of developments and activities permitted in wilderness; other comments requested that the National Park Service now pursue official designation of wilderness within the lakeshore.

**Access:** Comments were divided between those desiring more vehicular access and those wanting less (particularly related to shoreline access). Numerous comments mentioned the lakeshore fee structure. Some were concerned about poor maintenance on gravel county roads.

**External Issues:** Comments suggested that we should use creative and flexible approaches to external issues. They suggested that we should also educate the public about potential impacts to lakeshore resources and values.

**Trails:** Comments suggested a need for more trail opportunities along the lakeshore for a variety of uses. Some identified conflicting trail uses and the need for separate trails. The concept of a through-park trail was mentioned numerous times. Many were opposed to mountain bikes on trails. Many suggested seeking assistance from trail groups and governmental entities for trail planning and development.

**Hunting:** Comments were divided between those supporting maintained or increased hunting opportunities and those supporting the designation of no-hunt areas. Many expressed concern about visitor safety.

# The Purpose and Significance of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

As we begin the process of developing a general management plan for the lakeshore, it is important to affirm our understanding of Congress' intent in setting this beautiful area aside as a unit of the national park system, and to confirm the importance of the area to the nation's natural and cultural heritage. We do this in a set of Purpose and Significance Statements that are derived from the lakeshore's enabling legislation, legislative history, and other special designations. These statements supplement the many laws, regulations, and policies that govern the National Park System.

**Purpose Statements** represent the reasons for which the lakeshore was established, and come directly from the lakeshore's enabling legislation and other laws. Congress established Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to: Preserve outstanding natural features, including forests, beaches, dune formations, and ancient glacial phenomena in their natural setting and protect them from developments and uses that would destroy the scenic beauty and natural character of the area.

Protect scenic, scientific, and historic features for the benefit, inspiration, education, recreation, and enjoyment of the public.

**Significance Statements** describe the lakeshore's distinctiveness and help to place it in its regional and national context:

The lakeshore contains accessible and compactly grouped features of continental glaciation, including post glacial shoreline adjustment, wind formed dunes, and examples of plant succession.

The lakeshore area is one of the most scenic portions of the Lake Michigan shoreline. Its massive glacial headlands, diverse habitats, and superb water resources offer a broad range of recreational and inspirational experiences.

The lakeshore's historic maritime, recreation, and agricultural landscapes are of a size and quality that are unique on the Great Lakes and rare elsewhere on the United States coastline.

The lakeshore includes regionally- important native flora and fauna that has declined to an endangered, threatened, or rare status in the Great Lakes ecosystem.

## Decision Points

Over the last several months, the planning team has gathered information about public and staff desires and concerns about the future of the lakeshore. The team has organized these "issues" into several categories. Each category represents a primary decision that needs to be made in the general management plan. These decision points are important to the process because they will help to focus the scope of the plan. We need your input to help us ensure that we have not missed any important concerns. We believe the Sleeping Bear Dunes GMP needs to address the following decision points:

### 1. To what extent can we provide visitor access and use without exceeding acceptable impacts to lakeshore resources and values?

Some related issues:

- Increased visitor use pressure on the islands
- No established park carrying capacity
- Visitor crowding problems and interest in development expansion at the mouth of the Platte River
- Interest in additional facilities at Glen Haven
- Concerns about over-developing the park

**2. Is the lakeshore providing an appropriate range of experiences and opportunities to its visitors, or should they be decreased or increased?**

Some related issues:

- Increased interest in motorized/mechanized recreation
- Concern about visitor safety and access during hunting season
- Interest in increased biking opportunities
- Interest in more and longer trails
- Concern about resource protection and impacts from overuse
- Interest in additional overnight opportunities
- Interest in more beach access

**3. To what extent can we protect lakeshore values through agreements and/or partnerships with neighbors and inholders and/or boundary adjustments and land acquisition?**

Some related issues:

- Concern about noise, pollution, and scenic intrusion from some uses outside the lakeshore boundary
- Concern about inappropriate road maintenance practices
- Concern about too much NPS influence outside the lakeshore boundary
- Interest in protection of shipwrecks

**4. In order to achieve the lakeshore goal of resource protection and conservation, and to maintain the rich diversity of the lakeshore, to what degree can we protect and conserve natural and cultural resources without compromising the significant values of each?**

Some related issues:

- Balancing natural and cultural resources management and preservation
- Adaptive use for historic properties

## **Relationship of the GMP Process to Other Lakeshore Planning Efforts**

The lakeshore is involved in several other important planning efforts that will affect and be affected by the GMP. Several of these are highlighted here:

### **Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP)**

The preparation of this important implementation plan was begun in February 1998. Many of you have participated in its development. The plan, which details strategies for conservation and use of historic structures and landscapes, is now in draft form. In order to assure that the plan is closely aligned with the GMP, we will slow down the HPMP process until the GMP reaches a similar stage of development. As the GMP begins to take shape, we will keep you up to date about the relationship between the two planning processes.

### **Trail Planning**

The lakeshore is participating in planning efforts for some trails within the region. Involvement in these planning efforts will continue. The GMP will incorporate the eventual trail plans.

### **Transportation Studies**

The lakeshore has received funding to explore the desirability and feasibility of alternative transportation strategies within and around the park. The studies will examine transportation issues related to South and North Manitou islands, overall lakeshore access and circulation, and vehicle crowding issues at several specific locations. The studies will support the GMP; we will inform you when they begin.

## Your Input

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods:

- You may mail comments to Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630.
- You also may comment via the Internet to [slbe\\_gmp@nps.gov](mailto:slbe_gmp@nps.gov). Please submit Internet comments as an ASCII file and avoid the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include your name and return address in your Internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your Internet message, contact us directly at 231-326-5134.
- Finally, you may hand-deliver comments to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Headquarters and Visitor Center at 9922 Front Street, Empire, Michigan.

Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the public record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organization or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.